



## LAST CHANCE CAT SANCTUARY, INC.

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February 19, 2007

FOR HOUSE AG COMMITTEE - TUESDAY, FEB. 20, 2007

To: Montana House of Representatives Ag Committee Members  
RE: HB 720 and HB 726

We salute you! At last something is being presented at a State level addressing "breeding/selling" standards and "housing" standards for animals. HOWEVER, as members and Directors/Officers of a non-profit, 501(C)(3) humane organization (since 1999), we would like to see these types of "standards" applying to ALL companion animals, not just dogs, and housing standards need to be addressed to apply to ALL companion animal housing facilities, not just to "Breeder's".

We assume by reading the HB 720 that it was written to primarily address concerns pertaining to "Puppy Mill" type breeding operations. That's all well and good, "Puppy Mills" need to be shut down all together. However, the "backyard" and "designer" breeders are posing just as great a problem with poor quality and unhealthy puppies being produced (and we might add, way too many of them).

We applaud and support your efforts in this Bill introduction. We sincerely hope it "flies", but broadening the scope and applicability is very necessary to bring Montana into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with regards to animal care, control and protection.

In our community of Billings, MT and Yellowstone County (as well as the surrounding rural areas), it is very clear that the public wants to have sheltering/rescue organizations (and their facilities) as alternatives to the traditional municipal shelters. Thusly, many "Rescue", "Adoption", and/or "Sheltering" groups and individuals have sprung up over the last 8-10 years. It has been difficult to conduct legitimate business operations in a state which has absolutely no standards or guidelines regarding companion animal housing, health care or re-homing. Our organization and others need and would welcome having such state standards established. We have here in Billings/Yellowstone County recently established an Animal Care and Control Co-Op. One of our goals is to establish standards and guidelines for the housing, health care and re-homing of companion animals. It is the consensus of the Team Leaders involved with this Co-Op that these types of standards and guidelines should be State Mandated.

What is equally disturbing is that the majority of the counties in Montana do not even recognize Cats as Companion Animals, nor do they even "deal" with cats through animal control departments or personnel. This non-recognition and/or non-classification is ludicrous in view of the fact that cats have out-numbered dogs by at least a 4 or 5 to 1 margin coming through our organization's Spay/Neuter Clinics. You may wish to check with any municipal shelter or other sheltering facility to see how many cats vs dogs come through those facilities. For the last 3 years that we know of, cats have been the number one companion animal (pet) of choice in the United States. There are over 90 Million companion (owned) cats in the United States, and census studies have suggested that possibly another 90 million cats exist, consisting of the rural "barn" cats, and/or feral colonies (managed or unmanaged). It is the un-managed cat colonies which pose the greatest hazards to human public health. For any County, Municipality or State to not consider the cat as a companion animal or not "deal" with cats due to non-classification is not justifiable nor

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501(C)(3) Organization, all contributions are tax deductible.

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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defensible. It is high time that cats are included in any legislation pertaining to companion animals. It is **NOT** something to be left to the discretion of individual counties or municipalities - it needs to be State Mandated.

With regards to HB 726. We whole heartedly support the purposes for which this Bill is introduced to address. Companion animals and Service animals should be included in any disaster/evacuation plan(s).

Companion animal boarding in its extreme forms is most definitely a unique form of Animal Cruelty, and needs to be addressed, which does this Bill. We do believe, and studies have proven out, that "sick minds" commit acts of animal cruelty, and as such should have to submit to specialized psychological or psychiatric evaluation/testing, because studies have shown that many "animal boarders" can be highly educated and/or articulate individuals and will not "raise any flags" when submitted to a "general" or non-specialized evaluation. Animal boarders should be required to undergo treatment(s) as may be suggested by such specialized evaluation/testing.

We feel stronger restrictions and/or sentences and fines should be imposed upon individuals convicted of animal cruelty. Charges with multiple counts (more than two) and second time offenses (occurring at any future time after a first conviction) should be charged as Felonies not Misdemeanors and should carry the same or consistent penalties as those imposed under 45-8-210 (2) M.C.A. We also feel that in counties where Animal Cruelty charges have been made, that the County (Prosecuting) Attorney must proceed with the proper prosecution of this crime as with any other crime committed in his/her jurisdiction. Prosecuting Attorneys and Judges need to start being held accountable and responsible for allowing animal cruelty cases to slip willy-nilly and un-punished through the Court system. Because the victims of these crimes have no voices with which to offer testimony, then the evidence and testimony of animal care professionals and human mental health professionals must be viewed and taken seriously.

Thank you to all Ag Committee members and the Bill drafters for the introduction of these legislations and thank you for taking the time to read our input.

Respectfully,

*Catherine Schaeffer*      *MaryAnn Wegner*  
Catherine Schaeffer, Executive Director and  
MaryAnn Wegner, Secretary/Treasurer  
Last Chance Cat Sanctuary, Inc.

TO SAVE LIVES AND REDUCE THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS PETS.  
PLEASE, HAVE YOUR PET SPAYED OR NEUTERED!

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